

**Statement of Chairman Dan Burton  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere**

**Joint Hearing of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, House International  
Relations Committee and the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security,  
House Judiciary Committee**

**Hearing: The Need for European Assistance to Colombia for the Fight against Illicit Drugs**

**September 21, 2006**

As Chairman Coble pointed out, we are at a critical juncture in the war on drugs. Just as we and our Colombian allies are starting to make real progress in Colombia, we are finding that the path to ultimate success is being undermined by the growing demand for and consumption of Andean narcotics in Europe, especially Colombian cocaine.

During a recent fact finding trip to Spain and Portugal, it was discovered that as much as 50% of Colombian cocaine is now going to Europe. This development should send alarm bells ringing through the capitals of Europe, the European Union and at our own State Department. Spain, for example is now the second largest consumer of cocaine, per capita, just behind the United States. Colombian cocaine is being trafficked from Colombia, Venezuela and other nations in our hemisphere directly to Europe. Spain and Portugal, unfortunately, are the portals for this trafficking. With rising demand in Europe, and prices per kilogram reaching as much as three times more than here in the States, it is no wonder we are seeing record seizures of cocaine in this region. But, what is more disturbing is that the drug flow to Europe is undercutting every effort we have made to reduce production in Colombia, thus destroying any hope for peace and stability in that country.

Since Mr. Coble outlined the problem in detail, I wish only to take a short moment here to offer some possible strategies that can be readily adopted by Europe and the United States to stem the flow of drugs, and perhaps prevent the kind of drug abuse epidemic, characterized by increased crime rates, high body counts and broken communities, that we have suffered here.

**But, first I would like to air my disappointment that the European Union has again**

**declined to participate in such an important hearing. This decision follows a November of 2004 request when we asked the Europeans to dialog with us on this very issue. Then, like now, we were rebuffed. With 50% of Colombian cocaine going to Europe, it is hard to fathom their apparent lack of interest.**

It is clear that drug trafficking is no longer just an American problem. It is a global problem that will require a concerted effort on the part of the Colombians, the Europeans and the United States to resolve. To do this, the Congress, the State Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration must actively engage our European allies to recognize the drug problem they are suffering and encourage them to become active players in the development and pursuit of real solutions. Europe can no longer sit on the sidelines.

When Plan Colombia was first developed, it was believed that the European Union would make good on its funding pledge and support the non-security portions of the plan. This so called “soft side” assistance would have included alternative development, educational initiatives, job training programs and other programs designed to support farmers and others who would leave the drug production business. But, much of the pledged assistance never arrived. Now, six years later, The U.S. continues to pay the lion’s share of aid to Colombia, despite the fact that nearly half of all Colombian cocaine is now going to Europe!

It is time for Europe to revisit its previous commitment to soft-side assistance and begin a long term relationship with Colombia. For example, over the last few years, more than 40,000 members of the narcoterrorist groups FARC and AUC have laid down their arms and are looking to reenter society and become good citizens with honorable work. The European Union could contribute the necessary resources to provide these, mostly unskilled and untrained young demobilized Colombians, with education, job training and other skills needed to contribute to society. I would like to thank the Dutch government for building a demobilization center in Bogotá which now supports 600 demobilized fighters. We could use more help like this from our European allies.

Moreover, European law enforcement and other governmental agencies in Europe can follow the lead of Spain as it works to develop a joint European/Colombian law enforcement liaison center in Lisbon, Portugal, much like our Joint Interagency Taskforce center in Key West, Florida. Putting such a center in Europe would allow law enforcement officials, from all over Europe, to jointly operate with law enforcement representatives from Colombia, Brazil and the DEA where intelligence can be shared and cooperative strategies to interdicting drugs developed. To be successful, the U.S. Department of State should provide assistance and operational support for the new international police liaison center. In addition, all major seizures of cocaine in Europe should be tested by DEA to see if it is originating in Colombia, Peru or Bolivia. By taking these simple actions, and developing other cooperative programs, the tide of drugs washing up on European soil can be reduced.

Europe is on the verge of a cocaine epidemic of historic and tragic proportions. It is my hope, that by holding this hearing, our friends and allies in Europe will receive the message that it is time to act and that their American allies will stand with them to battle this deadly and mutual enemy. I agree with the Mr. Calvani from the UN office of Drugs and Crime whose testimony includes this quote:

“The international community and the United States must share the responsibility for reducing the world’s biggest supply of cocaine. Cocaine consuming nations need to reduce drugs demand, especially in Europe where abuse is rising.”

Thank you.